



## **Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, November 21, 2019, 4:30 pm

**Commissioners Present:** Jennifer Diaz, Nancy Kirby, Alexandra Millar, Lainey Rappaport

**Staff Present:** Cindi Wight – BPRW Director, Holli Bushnell - Office Assistant

**Public Present:** Thea Lewis, Anna Kronk, Carrie Wiater, Olivia Johnston, Claudia Sacks

**Commissioners Not Present:** Rita Church

Meeting was called to order at 4:39pm

### **I. Approval of Agenda**

Jennifer Diaz moved to approve the agenda, Alexandra Millar seconded, all were in favor.

### **II. Approval of Minutes from 10/24**

Diaz moved to approve the minutes from 10/24, Nancy Kirby seconded, all were in favor.

### **III. Guest Speaker – Dianne Leary of Vermont Old Cemeteries Association (via phone)**

Dianne Leary provided the commission with an overview of the work that Vermont Old Cemeteries Association (VOCA) does restoring and preserving old cemeteries, providing grant money, answering questions, and giving advice. They train volunteers to do cemetery care and stone repair and care. They have worked with the Burlington Cemetery Commission in the past as part of a work exchange between Burlington and Charlotte cemeteries.

In the future, volunteers from VOCA could come to Burlington to hold a training up at Greenmount, possibly in late spring this year. Timing is important as some of the cleaning and repair materials are temperature sensitive. The goal is that this project would be volunteer driven with a volunteer leader (also could have a commission leader or BPRW staffer) on site. There are many local community groups such as student volunteers from local high schools or civic groups that the commission or a volunteer could tap. A workshop would need to be scheduled no later than January or February of 2020 as VOCAs schedule fills up for the season.

Cindi Wight asked if this project would be more focused on cleaning or repair as well as what tools or equipment would be needed. Leary responded that the focus would be primarily on stone righting and repair, then eventually cleaning would come into play. The first step is to reset stones that are leaning, all other work follows that. In terms of tools and equipment, sur-pack is used to solidify the base of leaning stones. We would also need shovels, 2lbs to 3lbs brick hammers, several 4x4s and levels. Leary promised to provide the commission with a list of tools, supplies, and equipment after the call ended.

Diaz requested that Leary provide the commission with dates she or members of her group might be available next summer. At this point, there are only 2 dates that are not available – June 20<sup>th</sup>



and August 8<sup>th</sup>. Other than that, May, most of June, July, and most of August are available. The commission will discuss possible dates for a workshop at a future meeting.

Lainey Rappaport asked what would be involved in repairing stones at Greenmount that had fallen down the embankment. Leary was uncertain but felt that a crane or excavator might be necessary. She will speak with her husband and get back to the commission at a future date.

#### **IV. Guest Speaker – UVM Natural Resource Project Update – Anna Kronk, Carrie AWiater, Olivia Johnston, and Claudia Sacks**

The students provided the commission with an overview of their project. Their plan was to examine the plant and animal life present in Lakeview in the context of its role as an urban wildlife corridor. Their goals were to increase the understanding of urban green space, document the existing resources in Lakeview (and attempt to calculate the impact of the development happening next door), and ultimately provide comprehensive material concerning the flora and fauna present at the cemetery.

The students created a GIS map that shows all of the trees in Lakeview. In total there are 68 different species of trees in Lakeview, effectively classifying the space as an arboretum as well as a cemetery. Some of the more unusual species include 2 Paper Bark Maples and a Dawn Redwood which, though not native to Vermont, is a deciduous conifer and quite the unique species. They did look at the age of the trees, and calculate that the oldest trees at Lakeview are likely either Norway Spruce or the large Red Oak on the edge of Section Pine Grove #1 (or possibly a Maple). The end result of their study is the creation of a self-guided tour of the trees/scavenger hunt for different leaf varieties. They worked with both Branch Out Burlington and the VT Naturalist Program with Alicia Daniels.

The other aspect of their project involved documenting animal life by using a game camera. They camera spotted several Deer and Red Fox leading the students to believe there may be a red fox den on site. Other animals observed included raccoon, opossum, cats, birds, rabbits, and dogs. Lakeview is an extremely active wildlife area and the students hope that future classes may take up their project and continue studying the flora and fauna present at the cemetery (or other city cemeteries). The commission thanked the students for their hard work. Kirby was particularly interested in having a similar project at Greenmount in the future.

#### **V. Old Business**

##### **A. Greenmount Report and Discussion**

Rappaport shared images from her tour of Greenmount, illustrating issues with garbage/dangerous drug waste, monuments in need of repair and cleaning, large piles of brush that have not been properly disposed of, graffiti, and rutted and damaged roads.

Kirby provided the commission with in depth insight from her decades of living next door. She has observed that, since the development on Patchen Rd opened more people are coming through Greenmount on their way from home to work and vice versa. This traffic has been aided by the addition of pedestrian gates, which are a large improvement from the old days when people would cut the fence with bolt cutters to get in. The presence of walking commuters has helped to decrease the illicit activity that previously plagued Greenmount. Though there are still issues with the indigent and addicted populations, incidents have decreased. There is lots of wildlife at Greenmount including Black Bear, Moose, and Gray Fox.



She noted that most of the visitors to the cemetery beyond the daily walking traffic are people interested in the Revolutionary War era history contained therein. She noted that the American flag on the flagpole needs replacement. She also agreed with Rappaport that the roads are problematic and, in some cases impassable, and feels that something needs to be done about them.

Diaz provided the commission with a punch list of things she and Holli Bushnell observed on their tour of Greenmount. She echoed the concerns and observations of both Kirby and Rappaport (refuse, damaged monuments, road issues, excess brush), and provided some suggestions to remedy issues such as adding trash receptacles, transitioning the roads from driving to walking paths (could provide opportunity for a fundraiser where community members purchase engraved flagstones or bricks to be placed in new pathways), and putting a timer lock on the pedestrian gates. Diaz also suggested upgrading the lighting and signage to be more in keeping with the age and provenance of Greenmount, adding memorial benches and/or landscaping, and putting in interpretive panels and/or an informational kiosk to provide visitors with more information about prominent Greenmount residents.

Millar concurred with all that had been previously observed. She also noted that the embankment leading up from Colchester Ave to the cemetery fence is extremely steep and difficult to mow. This challenging area might be the perfect location to develop a pollinator garden.

Wight confirmed that chipping of the larger brush can be coordinated by volunteers and supervised by a member of the tree crew who will handle the actual chipping. The current goal is to get a group of volunteers together for green-up day 2020.

The commission will consider all the various issues with Greenmount and discuss a plan of action at an upcoming meeting.

#### **B. “No Dogs” Signage**

Rappaport reported that the “No Dogs” sign is back on the front gate at Lakeview. The sign was removed during the fence replacement. She asked if there were still other “No Dogs” signs and if they could be placed in other locations at Lakeview as well as at Greenmount. A general discussion of dogs in the cemetery followed. It has been observed that incidents of excrement have decreased in the last couple of years. Millar noted that individuals who use Lakeview as a space to walk their dogs (in spite of the sign prohibiting dogs) are predominantly respectful of the space, keeping their dogs leashed and always removing any waste. There are, of course, one or two exceptions, but regular walkers have spoken with the offending individuals and are acting in a self-policing manner.

### **VI. New Business**

#### **A. Queen City Ghostwalk & Lakeview Cemetery Book – Thea Lewis**

Thea Lewis, author and creator of the Queen City Ghostwalk, shared the content of her new book on Lakeview cemetery with the commission. Lewis has been involved in the historical and folklore communities for many years and has written multiple books on Vermont in general and Burlington in particular. Her latest book on Lakeview will discuss the lives of some of our most



prominent residents. The book will be released in May of 2020 and Lewis would like to work with the commission or the Friends of Lakeview to produce tasteful events to promote both her book, but, more significantly, Lakeview. Lewis would also like to create some sort of advance sale fundraiser. The commission encouraged her to reach out to the Friends of Lakeview to work with them on future events.

## **VII. Superintendent and Office Assistant Report**

### **A. Fees for Non-BPRW Events – Holli Bushnell/Thea Lewis**

Bushnell provided the commission with all mentions from previous minutes concerning fees for non-BPRW events. The minutes show that action was taken, but no documentation showing the decided upon fees, \$25 permit fee plus \$5 per person impact fee, was ever created.

Lewis previously discussed the issue with former office assistant Annie D'alton, but her questions were never answered and her concerns were never addressed. She feels that \$5 per person is far too high a percentage of her tickets (1/4 of her ticket cost). Lewis looked into other city owned and operated locations that require impact fees and found that events at Waterfront Park only require \$1 for dry events and \$2 for events where alcohol is served. As she never received answers from the commission on her questions that is the rate she has been paying to the city – a \$25 permit fee and a \$1 per person impact fee.

Commission members debated the merits of a higher fee for cemetery use, calculating whether the impact fee of \$1 was reasonable considering the historical nature of Lakeview. Bushnell put forward the idea that, as part of BPRW the cemeteries follow their policy and stick with the \$1/\$2 rates. Diaz moved to adopt BPRW policy and Millar seconded. Kirby asked if the \$1 impact fee could be donated to the Friends of Lakeview. Wight confirmed that it could be donated, but that the \$1 is considered revenue for the city. When put to a vote all were in favor of adopting BPRW rates for impact fees at Lakeview. Bushnell will put policy into writing for future events.

## **VIII. Commissioner Items**

There were no Commissioner items at this time.

## **IX. Public Comments**

No public comments were made at this time.

## **X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 6:30pm. The December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting was cancelled by consensus in light of the holidays. The next meeting date is tentatively set for January 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm at the Lakeview office.